



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
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Ramapo College Professor's Book is In-Depth look at Famed Southern Music Scene

MAHWAH, N.J. – Ramapo College Assistant Professor of Music Christopher Reali has captured the essence of an impactful era in music history in his new book, *Music and Mystique in Muscle Shoals*, recently published by the University of Illinois Press.

The book is an in-depth look at the fabled musical hotbed and examines the events and factors that gave the Muscle Shoals sound such a potent cultural power. Many artists trekked to FAME Studios and Muscle Shoals Sound in search of the sound of authentic southern Black music—and at times expressed shock at the mostly white studio musicians waiting to play it for them. Others hoped to draw on the hitmaking production process that defined the scene. Reali also chronicles the overlooked history of Muscle Shoals's impact on country music and describes the region's recent transformation into a cultural tourism destination.

Kirkus Reviews described the book as "A fascinating study of a musical microcosm, reveling in contradictions and debunking myths." *Library Journal* noted that Reali's work "successfully shatters misconceptions about soul music and an identifiable Shoals sound." *No Depression* included the text on their list of "12 Music Books That Will Add Some Cool to Your Summer," stating "Reali's cultural history of the magical, mystical Shoals captures the multifaceted layers of this little Alabama spot that produced so much storied music from artists as diverse as Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, and the Osmond family." Deb Grant, writing for the UK-based *Big Issue*, remarked, "The 'mystique' in the title of the book refers to the myths created around Muscle Shoals' regional identity,

many of which have further fed in to its impact on pop culture, which Reali decisively picks apart without straying from his commitment to the music.”

Reali grew up on Long Island, holds degrees from NYU, Queens College and Hunter College, and earned his Ph.D. in musicology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He combines his training as a cultural musicologist and music industry expertise to study popular music by examining the relationships between local music scenes and the business of music. His published work includes book and film reviews, and scholarly articles on the Allman Brothers Band and music publishing. At Ramapo College, Reali teaches classes about the business of music, the history of rock ‘n’ roll, American music history, and pop music studies. Before working as an educator, Chris toured the United States, Canada, and Western Europe as a guitar technician and tour manager for Chris Whitley, and as a guitar tech for David Gray. Reali is also an active singer-songwriter who regularly performs in the lower Hudson valley. He lives in Warwick, N.Y. with his wife and son.

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state’s premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice; is recognized as the state’s top college on the list of Best Disability Schools by *Great Value Colleges*; was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *CondéNast Traveler*; and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World Report*, *Kiplinger’s*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by CollegesofDistinction.com, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on Niche.com, and is designated a “Military Friendly College” in Victoria Media’s *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor’s degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master’s degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.